

Designer for Listening

Max Abramovitz

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ARCHITECTURALLY speaking, says Max Abramovitz, who rarely speaks from any other point of view, a chapel should "feel" like a chapel and an auditorium should "feel" like an auditorium.

The challenge of the new Philharmonic Hall of the Lincoln Center for the performing Arts, according to Mr. Abramovitz, was to produce a "fine room acoustically."

And in accepting the challenge, he says, he sought not only to make the room, but also to make it "look and feel" like the finest room acoustically that there could be. In his final design, made public yesterday, Mr. Abramovitz has also used a great deal of glass. Having people on the inside looking out and on the outside looking in struck the 51-year-old architect as an exciting kind of game. He hopes it will all be part of the pageantry of the hall as audiences converge upon it.

Two-Handed Ability

Mr. Abramovitz is a thoughtful, rather finely wrought man with clear blue eyes under heavy brows and long, delicate lashes. He has strong fingers, the nails square-tipped. He was born left-handed, but taught himself (under some pressure) to use his right hand. As a result, he is substantially ambidextrous—a quality that has served him both on the handball court and at the drafting board.

He was born in Chicago on May 23, 1908. At Crane Technical High School, he wrote a thesis on the development of American architecture since Colonial days. But he has difficulty recalling just why he chose the subject.

After graduation, he worked in a bank, and at night, went to a school of banking. But, inexplicably, "I think I caught myself doing a little drawing." So he switched his night studies to architectural drafting. After about a year and a half, he entered the University of Illinois, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture in 1929.

A master's degree from Columbia followed in 1931. Then a fellowship enabled him to spend two years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. During his stay, he met Anne Marie Causey, a young Floridian whom he later married.

Returning to this country



Draws with his head

After the death of J. Andre Foulhoux in 1945, the firm became Harrison & Abramovitz.

In 1942-46, Mr. Abramovitz was in uniform, the last two years in China. Then he was deputy director of planning for the United Nations buildings. He returned to active duty as a colonel during the Korean War and served as special assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force from March to July, 1952.

Since then, he has worked on many notable buildings, including United States Embassies in Havana and Rio de Janeiro; chapels for three faiths at Brandeis University, and the Corning Glass Building at 717 Fifth Avenue.

Other Projects Under Way

Currently, his firm is also engaged on the Columbia University East Campus and Law Center; the University of Illinois Assembly Hall; the new Time-Life building in Rockefeller Center, and the Loeb Student Center at New York University, among other projects.

He lives at 431 East Eighty-fifth Street and has a summer place on Cape Cod. His son Michael was born on Feb. 7, 1939, and a daughter, Katherine, nicknamed Kassie, on Valentine's Day, 1941.

Mr. Abramovitz says he has no hobbies, but likes to philosophize about his work. He feels that people should not have to ask why a building